



## Bridgewater Review

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Volume 23 | Issue 2

Article 11

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Dec-2004

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### Recommended Citation

(2004). News from CART. *Bridgewater Review*, 23(2), 22-23.  
Available at: [http://vc.bridgew.edu/br\\_rev/vol23/iss2/11](http://vc.bridgew.edu/br_rev/vol23/iss2/11)

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# News from CART

(Center for the Advancement of Research and Teaching)

## CART TEACHING AND RESEARCH FELLOWS

*Two new fellowship positions have been established to assist faculty members in their research and teaching. Professor Henry Vandenburg of the Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice has been named as CART Research Fellow, and Professor John Marvelle of the Department of Elementary Childhood Education has been appointed CART Teaching Fellow, both for the 2004-2005 academic year.*



HENRY VANDENBURGH

As CART Research Fellow, Professor Vandenburg is responsible for encouraging and supporting faculty research. Hank, as he likes to be known, has already arranged several Brown Bag lunchtime sessions, informal meetings designed to provide a forum for participants who wish to share experiences related to their research. Topics discussed so far include techniques for getting the writing process under way, coping with the rejection of a manuscript, and composing an effective cover letter. In addition to the Brown Bag sessions, Professor Vandenburg is holding a series of research seminars, each one with a panel consisting of faculty members possessing particular kinds of expertise. For example, one seminar focuses on writing and publishing textbooks, another on scholarly monographs and a third on writing for refereed journals. In addition, Professor Vandenburg is available to consult with faculty members individually.

Professor Vandenburg's own research background is wide and varied. He is the author of a sociology textbook, *Deviance*, as well as of many book chapters and articles. He has presented papers at numerous conferences, and has served as a reviewer and referee for sever-

al journals. Having joined the BSC faculty in the fall of 2003, Professor Vandenburg was soon impressed with the high quality of Bridgewater's "world-class" faculty. He approves of the fact that the College encourages its faculty to pursue all kinds of research and to seek a wide variety of outlets, in contrast to the one-pointed research prevalent in some other institutions.

Professor Vandenburg did not begin his professional life in the academic world. He worked for several years as a psychiatric technician, then as a health care manager, before enrolling in the Ph.D. program in Sociology at the University of Texas. Drawing on his knowledge of the health care industry, he focused his research on medical sociology and wrote his dissertation on "Organizational Deviance in For-Profit Psychiatric Hospital Business Practices." "Organizational deviance," Professor Vandenburg explains, refers to fraud practiced by organizations; his thesis analyzed unethical referral practices and kickbacks to doctors. For example, adolescent psychiatrists in Texas were often furnished stipends of as much as \$20,000 per month to provide 20 or so teenagers for admission to a psychiatric hospital. Medical sociology continues to be one of his main interests, and he has been asked to write a textbook in that field.

Having helped guide several students through the writing of M.A. theses, Professor Vandenburg is aware of the kinds of problems that typically occur in scholarly writing. Writer's block, he says, is very common, stemming from the fear of failure. He recalls one student in a master's degree program research course who wrote and re-wrote the first page of his thesis, trying to make it perfect. I told him to "make it horrible," Professor Vandenburg says, "I insisted that he just keep writing." The student was finally able to produce a successful thesis. Another common problem is coping with revision. When a paper submitted to a journal is rejected or sent back for revision, the author's first reaction is often anger at the referees. "The writer has to overcome the initial reaction of 'I hate them,'" Professor Vandenburg counsels. He advises putting the manuscript away in a desk drawer for a week before looking at it again. Having calmed down, the author can then decide whether to send his paper to another journal or to attempt the required revisions. If the author chooses to revise, Professor Vandenburg suggests, it's a good idea to compose a cover letter to send with the resubmitted manuscript, explaining in detail exactly what has been done to satisfy the referees' criticisms.



JOHN MARVELLE

Professor Marvelle comes to the position of Teaching Fellow with many years of classroom experience and a longstanding interest in enhancing student learning. At BSC, he has worked with teachers-in-training and has co-taught with members of several academic departments, including Biology, Mathematics and Computer Science and Special Education. During his eight years as department chair, Professor Marvelle worked with his colleagues to design syllabi, to develop new teaching strategies and incorporate new technologies, and to identify "outcomes."

In his role as CART Teaching Fellow, Professor Marvelle has conducted two workshops with a very practical focus: the first, "Difficult Students," addressed the challenges posed by such students and suggested strategies for handling them; the second, "Revising Your Syllabus," analyzed syllabus construction, including the most effective ways of explaining requirements and grading schemes, as well as identifying outcomes. Professor Marvelle has also worked with individual BSC faculty members to help shape and improve methods of classroom teaching and assessment.

Another key project for Professor Marvelle is a peer coaching program. Participants in the program partner with colleagues to explore and improve teaching skills by observing and coaching one another, using a non-evaluative strategy. Observing one another's classes and sharing ideas, faculty members seek ways to become more effective teachers. One key aspect of peer coaching is that participants generate their own questions. For example, an instructor might ask her peer "coach" to

observe which students she is actually addressing in the classroom: Is she speaking to everyone in the class? Or is she focusing on those students who raise their hands? How many students are taking notes? When teachers formulate the questions, Professor Marvelle has learned, they are especially interested in the answers. He hopes to establish a community of faculty members who meet on a regular basis to discuss learning and teaching.

Professor Marvelle emphasizes the fact that his work is completely independent of the teaching evaluations that are part of the tenure and promotion process. Nonetheless, he is aware that his new position has pitfalls. Being overly aggressive, appearing to lecture colleagues on how they ought to teach, he could easily arouse resentment rather than winning co-operation. "My real goal," he says, "is not to be the last Teaching Fellow."

The challenge of engaging students in their own learning has absorbed Professor Marvelle's attention for many years. He rejects the notion that teaching is a collection of gimmicks. Students will be more engaged, he argues, if they have a reason for learning and, in his own teaching, Professor Marvelle always tries to provide this kind of motivation. For one recent project, students in an education class were assigned to interview teachers who are working to include children with special needs in their classrooms. Their mission was to gather responses to a single, basic question: "What does someone need to know to do your job?" Having completed their interviews, the students understood what they needed to know to be successful teachers far better than if they had read about the subject in a textbook.

*Bringing enthusiasm and expertise to their new positions, Professors Vandenburg and Marvelle provide a valuable resource for BSC faculty. They invite their colleagues to contact them, either for supportive research advice and pre-reading (Professor Vandenburg) or to talk about learning and teaching in the college classroom and to suggest ways to build our community of learners (Professor Marvelle).*